

\$598,890 raised for northern New Mexico students, and counting...

July 1, 2015



With the final numbers still being tabulated, Los Alamos National Laboratory employees have pledged at least \$348,890 to the Los Alamos Employees' Scholarship Fund (LAESF) during this year's Laboratory fundraising campaign. A \$250,000 match from Los Alamos National Security, LLC brings the Los Alamos total so far to a record-breaking \$598,890.

The Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Foundation, which administers the fund, will use the donations to award scholarships to students in seven northern New Mexico counties in 2016.

Employees who make a difference

Thanks to the generosity of donors inside and outside the Laboratory, more than 1,000 students have been awarded \$5 million in scholarships since LAESF's inception in 1998.

Walter Atencio, Denise Thronas and David Dixon are three Los Alamos employees dedicated to helping create young people's pathways to success. Walter Atencio, for example, feels a sense of joy and accomplishment when he hears the success stories of LAESF recipients.

"I'm a product of several scholarships myself," Atencio said, "so I understand the importance of giving. It provides opportunities which otherwise might not be available."

After graduating from Menaul School in Albuquerque, Atencio attended Northern New Mexico Community College, the College of Santa Fe, the University of New Mexico and Central Missouri State University, with his college studies primarily focused on chemistry, biology and the environmental sciences.

Atencio joined Los Alamos 34 years ago as an undergraduate student intern and today works in the Laboratory's Occupational Health and Safety Division.

"Giving to LAESF is a way for me to give back to the community that invested in me at one time," Atencio noted. "I also give to LAESF, because the scholarships are an investment in the future of our young people. LAESF helps create leaders, provide direction for our children and send a message to this country that we won't settle for less."

Atencio paused for a moment. "The size of one's contribution does not matter," he added. "When you place all donations together, they have a significant impact on our society."

Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo's Denise Thronas gives to LAESF because she, too, knows from first-hand experience what it is like to be a student struggling to pay for college. Now working for Los Alamos' Manufacturing Engineering and Technologies Division, she always wanted to return the favor and help others.

"I challenge myself to increase my contribution each year if possible," Thronas said. "I take pride in helping someone change their life, because the individual's personal progress ultimately benefits the whole world."

Brand-new Laboratory staff member David Dixon completed his PhD in nuclear engineering in February 2015.

"While in school for the past 10 years," Dixon explained, "I often wondered whether I could have succeeded without the financial support from scholarships and grants. Now that I'm in a better financial position, I've decided to share some of my good fortune by supporting LAESF's Endowed Leadership fund."

Dixon joined the Air Force straight out of high school and four years later entered the University of New Mexico's nuclear engineering program on the G.I. Bill.

"I was extremely lucky that my educational path was free of many of the usual financial stressors," Dixon said. "It's gratifying to join such a great group of Laboratory employees and community members committed to helping others."

To contribute to the LAESF scholarships year-round, generous individuals and organizations can visit the LANL Foundation's [Make a Pledge](#) website.

Applications for the 2016 LAESF awards will be accepted beginning in October 2015.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

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